

DANIA MONDINI - CLAUDIO LOIODICE

Limited Edition

THE

DEATH, ART & CRIME

MODIGLIANI

RACKET



Ladri di Biblioteche



AMEDEO MODIGLIANI: THE BOY WHO LOVED STONE By Mr and Mrs Liodice

There are journeys that have no point of return. This one begins in a small-town railway station. With his seventeen-year-old enthusiasm the imprudent product of a rich and bourgeois Livorno arrives at a half empty railway station. He's excited and he does not lack courage. He couldn't possibly know that this was only going to be the beginning of a life spent between the sea and the banks of the Seine, as the train tracks clanked. It finally seemed as though the consumption that had made him bedridden was a forgotten memory. The train: it's energy and vitality, and the driving force behind it, all belong to him.

The vacation he had taken, with his mother, in the previous months, had brought him back to life with greater strength, a renewed desire to fight, and a greater consciousness of what he wanted. He does not feel alone, for the love and history of his family accompany him. Despite the anxiety of knowing he was still weak, this time she decided to part with him. She let him go. His moods, and the restlessness of his spirit, however, did not go unnoticed by her. Her empathy is deeply present with her youngest son, the most fragile and possibly the most loved, definitely the most defenceless, and the most brilliant. But this time, she saw in him the strength of a project, the firm conviction that he was ready to face it. So now, he's waiting as the steam-driven pistons set his dreams in motion as well. He understood this by looking at a mountain eroded by man, made to be smooth and shiny. He perceives his time as that of a society in motion and does not resist this, rather supports the flow of change, and feeds off of it. The railways start to make the Italy of the early 1900s a nation that looks to the future. With a change in Pisa, from Livorno, the railway inherited from the Grand Duchy reaches Florence, but also Versilia and from there Genoa and France. The world is shrinking; the horizons of the children of the new century are broadening.

The big clock of the train station jerks its hands. The minutes that separate him from the departure go by slowly. He feels he understands. He has been pondering for months. He also wrote to his friend Oscar: "I would like my life to be like a river full of abundance, which flows with joy on the earth. You are now the person I can tell everything: well, I am now rich and fertile with shoots and I need cultivation ". With his hint of a beard, the demeanour of being a boy from a good family, his restored health, he feels that his destiny is now in his hands: in what his hands will be able to do. He does not hesitate when he approaches the counter and asks for: "A ticket for Pisa". Hardly any luggage, only the essentials. He knows that his life at his destination will be simple, focused on essentials. Some money in his pocket that his family could give him. In his mind, an idea. This time he did not want anyone with him. The previous years passed by too quickly, so many things happened inside and outside of him. In the past three years, he spent weeks between life and death twice: typhoid¹, then consumption.

In that sort of limbo in 1898, he dreamt of his destiny and when he woke up, he no longer wanted to attend high school. He had decided he wanted to take "drawing lessons". Complicated years; the images of what was happening around him would remain forever blurred in his mind. The high fever was consuming him. The voices that echoed in the house in Via delle Ville seemed distant, feeble: his worried mother, always at his bedside, does not give up even when faced with the doctor's verdict, that her son's fate is written. She feels his anger, his strength and his exasperation. Days spent with time almost standing still in which, however, he lights a fire within himself. The typhus that forces him to bed and the arrest of his older brother overwhelm the family as if in a whirlwind. A determined man, his brother, a "leader" who was about to change the world of politics and the relationship between workers and masters which often

¹ *Two contagious diseases that bring us back by analogy to the present day, the sick young man misses the cure by a short time. The scientists Pfeiffer and Kalle had developed since 1896 the first vaccine against the salmonella bacterium that causes the typhoid fever and in the same year, the immunologist Widal had discovered and extracted the antibodies contained in the serum of convalescent patients, creating a serological test capable of detecting the presence of the disease. Progress was not fast enough to provide the cure to everyone; only in 1943, the vaccine will be administered on a large scale.*

landed him in trouble. The two were similar; the fire within them: one was burning for social commitment, the worker's struggles, and the rights of a poor and illiterate Italy. The other for beauty, poetry, the charm of art in all its expressions. With the same passion and generosity, each of them immersed themselves in their own element, drawing satisfaction and sometimes despair. The mother is the source from which to replenish their drive. When the eldest son was arrested and jailed in Piacenza on the 4th of May, the news did not surprise her that much. She approves of socialist ideals and faces her husband's criticisms with tenacity. She proudly waves a red flag from the balcony on May 14th as she welcomes the news of the six-month sentence issued by the military court of Florence for her beloved young lawyer. He will serve part of his sentence in the Dominican prison in Livorno, while she faces, the corrosive disease of her youngest son, alone. The third son leaves for Liege. Her husband Flaminio is always in Sardinia. Her only company at home, "Piticche", graced with a difficult and grumpy character. The atmosphere back home is burdensome. "The worst period in the history of the family" - his mother will always say - Outside, however, an air of renewal and the growing fermentation of the new century. Italy, still unripe, needs to change the rules and render them unitary. Livorno was where the biggest difference was being made. It could not have been any other way, and it is no coincidence that the political, socialist and pro-European spawning ground has its deepest roots here. Even before London and Paris, what we now call a melting pot was born in Livorno. Since its foundation, with the laws of Livorno, the Medici city had given way to a multi-ethnic community, not divided into ghettos, but made up of "nations", colours, languages, and traditions that blend together. A national collective agreement for the "bottle maker's" of this city is signed for the first time, a conquest woven by that young and rebellious lawyer who has just been released from the cells on the "Ditches". It is always thanks to his industrious political and social activity that along the coast, among the quarrymen, the first cooperative is born characterising the western provinces of Tuscany. The train is here. In an instant, all thoughts vanish. In first class amongst the brown velvet seats, he finds a seat next to two young foreign women. He places his luggage on the wooden shelves and catches their pleased gaze. He is a handsome young man, with strong and virile features, but with an almost feminine kindness and grace, brought up by a sweet yet firm mother. He is not yet a man but he is already able to exert a certain charm on women. Pisa, Livorno, Lucca have been a romantic destinations and a pole of attraction for great writers and poets from across the Channel for years. Many young English women travel to discover the wonders of art on a continuous pilgrimage to Italy. Looking at them brings back the memories of the nights in Capri, under the moon, "walking alongside a Norwegian lady, truthfully very erotic but also very pretty" - as he had written to his friend Oscar. A thought that took him back months. The lost gaze on the horizon preserves the memories of a royal Naples, of its sea of which he had benefited from so much, and of its hidden treasures. Above all, the sculptures. The Greek and Roman, masterpieces of the Museums, the caryatids and the Madonnas by Tino Camaino. He lingered so much on his oblique setting of faces; on his cylindrical necks, on the light that sculpted volumes. He then followed the footsteps of the great artist from Siena and his works to Florence, passing through Rome and its Baroque churches. However, his imagination and inspiration had found greater nourishment in the city of Michelangelo. Dozens of masters from all eras. In front of the gaunt figures by Camaino, however, in his primitive and essential portrayal of the human, the deepest emotion is always unleashed in him. There he is caressing the sculptures with his hand. Feeling, touching, not just looking, and the desire to transform stone into a suggestion of beauty grows within him too. He remembered exactly the moment when he understood that his true aspiration was to sculpt, the irrepressible desire to measure himself against matter. It was that desire that brought him there now, under the marble mountains, on the slopes of those carved peaks that showed their glow from miles away. Meanwhile, the train arrives at its first destination. In Pisa he can already taste the marble, now finished in magnificent and unique creations, he can smell the sweat of the quarrymen. He has just enough time to look around, another convoy is waiting for him headed right under the Apuan Alps. The carriage that takes

him to Pietrasanta is full of traders from all over the world who reach the cities of the quarries from Florence. On the way, people bargain on the cost and value of the blocks; they discuss the quality of the extractions, the colour and the ductility. A few words spent on human fatigue, on the dangers and risks they run during mine explosions. The young passenger listens and thinks. Money only, money, but what about talent? None of his traveling companions could then imagine that an artist was sitting in a corner, a thinker who wanted to extract these stones' souls. The images of dozens of deposits that mark and follow the entire route up to Carrara flow alongside this. The arrival is near and the excitement increases, as Mount Altissimo appears more and more majestic. It is April 1902, Emilio Puliti, of the same age, stonecutter² and son of art, awaits him at the station. His elder brother, a political and trade union activist, selected the right person who would accompany him in this new adventure. The companion, just like Virgil in the Aeneid, would support him and initiate him to experimentation with stone. Just a few months earlier, the socialists in Livorno had won the elections by joining the "popular block". The lawyer was attributed the role of councillor for duty and consumption. His stature in the party was growing also at regional level. It was precisely under the leadership of a group of young and courageous jurists that the workers' movement, in those years between ports, quarries, and countryside, discovered its strength and grew in commitment and protest. Therefore, he worked hard to find a trusted home, where he could "shelter" his younger brother who had recovered during the trip around Italy. Upon his return, he had insistently asked to sculpt. Two fighting companions helped: Giuseppe Pescetti and Luigi Salvatori. Salvatori in particular was from Seravezza and was considered. "the lawyer of the poor people", of those who lost a father, a son, a husband to mines. Pescetti, also a lawyer, was party delegate for Seravezza. The strong concerns of the socialist and anarchist left movements for the working-class world are evident, which counted their dozens of deaths every year. Emilio's family was known for their activities in the extraction and processing of marble. He was a good boy, just shy of twenty; he lived in Via di Mezzo, behind a small door nestled between prestigious and elegant shops. The young artist did not want to go to a workshop; he was not looking for a great teacher of the stature of Ferdinando Palla, director of the Pietrasanta School of Fine Arts. However, even if that had been the case, it wouldn't have been possible. His serious and long illnesses, which had damaged his lungs, did not allow him to stay in places where many worked, where the marble dust would have clogged all the alveoli of his lungs in a few days, forcing him to new therapies and above all, where he would be subject to strict discipline. In those days, "schools" were formed when necessary, according to the orders that the shops received. You had to work tirelessly. There were many students, but none of them wanted to become an artist, even if they were indeed artists. A task was assigned to each of them, as was now a centuries-old tradition: a capital, a column or a rose window. Real artwork that would have adorned palaces, churches, and squares of the most beautiful cities in the world. They lacked academic training, a spirit of initiative, planning and concept. Yes, artists, but none of them felt the need to express a thought of their own; for them it was enough to execute, to earn what little money they needed to live. On the contrary, money did not matter at all to the artist from Livorno. He possesses the cultural qualities to "dialogue" with art, to discuss its form; he studied drawing, he discovered the beauty of a clean and essential, lightning-fast stroke. He already set his "academic" prerogatives, such as in-depth design, study, research, observation. However, he has never yet held a piece of stone in his hands. He arrived in Pietrasanta for that encounter with the material. The two young men with luggage in hand head to Via di Mezzo amid the curious glances of those they encounter. The noises of work tools pour out of the shops of the parallel streets. One of them wearing a jacket, scarf and white shirt. The look of a young master on vacation with a curious gaze. The other, in workwear with boots, a torn jacket and a cap. Emilio talks about his world with a smile, the life of the "village" whelp every day for centuries they add a piece to

² *In local expression "scarpellino"*

the history of art. He has a surprise ready. He's cogitated for days with his father on how to help their guest. Five parallel streets, like the fingers of a hand, that stretch from Piazza del Duomo towards the valley. The palm encloses the lines where his destiny is contained, which any gypsy can read. In those lines, similar to the veins of the stone, the story of a village is engraved, which quickly became a city known throughout the world as a little Athens: "The Athens of Versilia". A future made bright by its workers and quarrymen. Lives often sacrificed to "steal" the most precious marble from the mountain. The Stagio Stagi is the thumb that points towards the sea, towards that landing place wanted by Michelangelo: Forte dei Marmi. The index, the most important, is what the inhabitants of Pietrasanta call Via di Mezzo. It's name often changed, but always honoured powerful people: during the Kingdom it was named after Vittorio Emanuele, later it was named after the revolutionary par excellence, the "carbonaro" Giuseppe Mazzini. The industrious nature of the Apuan population always sustained their vocation for mutual aid and the birth of the first cooperatives is testament to this. The middle finger runs from the column of Liberty, surmounted by the lion of the Marzocco, by Donato Benti, from which it takes its name: "Via del Marzocco". The ring finger, Via dei Piastroni, is placed to protect the fortress that overlooks the town and finally, the pinky bears the name of the ancient theatre of the "Aerostatic", commissioned by a group of aristocrats back in 1783. The houses, on the other hand, slide down from the Duomo, enclosing the streets, in double rows with a small courtyard in the centre. Only the closest to the large square have the appearance of noble residences. The others, all similar in height and even in the facades, tell the story of a hard-working town where men, but also women, roll up their sleeves every morning to bring home what is needed. In Via di Mezzo there are most of the luxury goods shops: shoes, fabrics, the cinema. In the others, you can find workshops, small family workshops and food retailers. Emilio, son of Vincenzo Puliti, marble worker, and of Fortunata Belfiore, day labourer lives in a building on two floors above ground. The two boys reached their destination. The youngest one opens the door and from the hallway, you immediately enter a shaded courtyard. This is the surprise. Here, among some washtubs and rows of hanging clothes, they would have dedicated their time to stone. Far from the marble dust, from the noisy factories they would have spent hours studying together how you "attack" the block. Out in the open. During the day, Emilio was busy outside; his guest would have to dedicate himself to reading, walking and extracting the secrets of the local masters hidden in the parishes of the small Romanesque villages scattered over the town. He would have breathed the clean and light air of the chestnut woodlands; he could have seen how the blocks are transported from the quarries to the sea; he would have learned to love the mountains and their whiteness. The climate was suitable to him, the quiet life of the place gave him a lot of time to think, imagine, scrutinise, and understand. He often thought back to the days in Florence, spent contemplating the masterpieces of the Uffizi and Palazzo Pitti. For weeks, he visited the National Library to read the rare art books kept there. His knowledge had expanded exponentially, but in Pietrasanta he is still able to find new incentives. He spends his afternoons, every dusk and holidays, in the courtyard with Emilio. They open the "toolbox" and they start following a project, a drawing, an idea. There is no shortage of stones. They choose them carefully. Each small block will keep its dimensions: they will become "heads". Meanwhile, in Florence, at the Academy of Fine Arts, Master Fattori opens his school of nudes. On May 7th, enrolling in the Macchiaiolo course is almost a "duty". The boy wants to learn, but school for him is like fitting into a tight shoe as he wants to experiment. On May 9th, he writes his friend Gino. In his pocket, he has a picture of one of his "masterpieces". The format too small to appreciate the detail, enlargements are necessary: the photographer used half a plate and should have used the whole one instead. "Dear Romiti, the enlargements could be 18 x 24 other', than the head of course. Make them chic. I would like to have them soon, 3 or 4 copies of each (for you as many as you want) to send them to me here in Pietrasanta I hope to work, or rather get somewhere with my work, and see you again soon".

He needs to practice drawing his sketches that he will need to sculpt; he wants to tap on the chisel to bring

shape to his dreams. He even passed the required exams at the Academy obtaining permission to make copies in museums. However, his anarchist spirit always distances him from the easiest path, from path most taken. In Florence, he sparingly attends the Academy, but is a frequent visitor of the Uffizi and the National Library, teeming with books about art. At one point he is even accused of trying to take a very valuable book from the collection. He was prosecuted and represented by the same lawyer, Pescetti, a very prominent political figure in Florence, delegate of the socialists of Seravezza, in the regional council, that his-brother Emanuele, knew all too well.

He cannot resist, he feels ready to do it alone. Throughout the summer, he comes and goes between Florence, Livorno and Pietrasanta. The heat of the city is not good for his health. Returning to the courtyard brings great satisfaction. However, everything isn't as he envisioned it: stone is not malleable; the shape escapes the control of the chisel and other tools. However, he is pleased with some of his attempts; resembling the projects as imagined on paper. Emilio is perplexed. Nevertheless, he likes that 'head'. The great sculptor that he would later become had just taken his first steps.

It is 1903, the journey continues. With his pictures in his pocket, he presents himself at the School of Nudes of Venice. "My name is Modigliani, Amedeo Clemente, I am a sculptor and I come from Livorno".

"When Modigliani started working the stone, already had the shape he wanted to create in front of him and intervened solely to give it proportions without modifying its innate expression. The scalpel becomes something akin to a pencil for him, that obediently followed his internal dream and vision. This is how we explain the expressive shapes that arise directly from the depth of his thought. What touches us, what gives his works of art this incredible momentum, is this almost primitive purity of his soul, translated by a cultivated intelligence. His constructive drawings first, then the sculptures, and at the very end his caryatids, show, that Modigliani had a first grasp on the 'laws' of a new architecture, in his drawings we can already see geometrical accuracy. Then he shows us new shapes, lines so simple, that strengthen their allurements, and finally, his sculptures are testament to a sentiment certain of the science of proportions of which only he knew the secret. The development of his talent as a sculptor was extraordinarily rapid. Above all else they are 'heads' that could have come from Byzantine art, then the road becomes simpler, freer. The technical difficulties are a thing of the past". This is what Arthur Pfannsteil wrote in his catalogue in 1929, the first catalogue revolving around Amedeo Modigliani, just nine years after the artist's death

He wanted to be a sculptor and it was due to the compulsive way in which he drew whenever he could find any paper, until that line made by a singular track did not glide lightly, rather divided space, giving it shape and volume.

"...In his drawings there is innovation, the simplification and distillation of form... he sculpted in the same way: he drew for long periods of time, and then attacked the block. If he made a mistake, he would take a new block and start over." This is how his friend, and Parisian doctor Paul Alexandre describes the way he attacked stone.

"The most powerful drawings by Modigliani are the drawings of a "sculptor: that is what encapsulates his certainty. He fully realised himself in sculpture." Francois Bergot conservateur generale du Patrimoine chargé du Musee des Beaux-Arts de Rouen for the exhibition catalogue at Palazzo Grassi in Venezia 1993. Amedeo Modigliani had found the way to transfer his dream from paper to matter. In Ambrogio Ceroni's catalogue twenty-five sculptures are listed. According to Paul Alexandre, who was a direct witness between 1906 to 1914, there were "a little more than twenty" sculptures that were realised in Paris between 1910 and 1913. Within the catalogue, which remains the most credible point of reference for the artist's work, there are the original sketches and studies conducted. Every sculpture is preceded by this. His own daughter, Jeanne writes in Modigliani Senza Leggenda about a "head" of a woman made of chalk of which she "recognises the stylistic relationship with the head of La Juive" and she is convinced that "it was

created in his first years in Paris, or possibly earlier, in Italy. Therefore, to the family it was a known fact that Dedo was sculpting in Italy.

In the spring of 1909 Modigliani moves to Cite Falguiere to be closer to his Romanian friend and sculptor Costantin Brancusi.

"It is false to believe that one of the two could have been a teacher to the other. They were incredibly different, but they shared a complete disinterest in anything but their obstinate research" — writes Noel Alexandre, whilst retelling memories of his father.

Therefore, where, when and from who did Modigliani learn how to sculpt? How could so much ability and experience suddenly mature in France? The Florentine historian of art, Alessandro Parronchi, Jeanne's friend and researcher of Italian artists of the 1900s claims that "his success as a sculptor was so surprising that it raised suspicions as to how his business had developed".

He is referring to the school of thought that is happy to acknowledge Modigliani as a sculptor but only during his Parisian era.

Coming back from his trip in 1902, between Naples, Capri, and Rome, where he had been in his mother's company, he only stops in Livorno for a couple of days. The climate just isn't for him. His mother who is convinced that the wind in Livorno is damaging to his already suffering lungs takes him away from the city as soon as she can. Amedeo himself leaves traces of his artistic growth, that started in Italy in 1902. With a letter addressed to Gino Romiti he certifies his presence in Pietrasanta. We can ascertain that the infamous postcard was sent on May 9th of that same year, as that year, the only Friday falls on that date. We find the answers to our questions in Versilia. Exclusively in this special edition we will publish what was found in parish records. The men of the Puliti family, up until the first years of the 1900s were marble workers and stonemasons. In the apartment, at 30 Via Vittorio Emanuele (nowadays 26 Via Mazzini otherwise known as Via di Mezzo) as aforementioned, Emilio Puliti, at various moments in time from 1902 onwards hosts Amedeo, at least until 1913.

In one of the two postcards sent from Pietrasanta on May 6th 1913, to Paul Alexandre, Modigliani imparts his address for all correspondence. The address is still "Via Vittorio Emanuele — Pietrasanta. Tuscany". Every time that Modigliani comes back to Italy he goes to the city of marble, and visits its surroundings: caves, villages drenched in sunlight that make these blocks of marble even more scintillating, mountains and romantic churches.

"Generally, when summer arrived, Modigliani had a great longing to go to Livorno. Throughout his life he will go there every summer. His last trip will be in 1912. There he had a very discouraging experience, as he brought with him photographs of his pieces. He showed them to his painter friends from Livorno, who were horrified... and it would seem as though they had advised he throw these pictures in a ditch. Disappointed, he made a return to Paris. Jeanne Modigliani retells this instance in a TV interview in 1964³ bringing back a family memory. Aunt Vera, in fact, when speaking of Amedeo's last trip to Livorno can never recall if it was 1912 or 1913. Jeanne Modigliani is the only voice that collects all these family memories and allows for them to reach us, maintaining that Amedeo's greatest ambition was 'sculpting and that "his first push in that direction had been given to him in Italy in 1902, and not in Paris in 1908; as the majority of art critics claim".

It is only in 1993 with the exhibition of the Alexandre collection at Palazzo Grassi in Venice, that it is decreed with utmost certainty that Dedo's last trip to Italy was in 1913.

³ 20/05/1964: *Almanacco di Storia Scienze e Varia Umanità*

Paul Alexandre affirms that Modigliani comes back to Italy twice. It is not due to health reasons. The doctor recalls that in Paris "until 1914 he did not fall frequently nor gravely ill". Therefore, the reasons that brought him back to Italy were not health related, as many continue to claim. Modigliani was "hungry" and had a great desire to experiment and hone his passion as a sculptor. Pietrasanta, the Apuan caves, and Versilia's history of having welcomed Michelangelo before him, gave Modì greater opportunities than Paris. In the French capital he was forced to practice on hardened wooden planks, as he was unable to retrieve marble or stone.

Jean Alexandre, Paul's brother who had a very close relationship with Amedeo writes on the 28th of May 1909 that from July to September of that year, Modigliani would be in Italy. "It will be good for him under all aspects". His return is estimated to be the 21st of September.

For Parronchi "few were, as Modigliani was, homesick for his place of birth".

Modigliani, incredibly young and at the time an unknown dreamer, finds in Pietrasanta and generally in Versilia a cultural fermentation from which he can nourish himself, as was the case in Paris eventually. Between the mountains and the caves, he meets sculptors and intellectuals such as Viani, D'Annunzio and Nomellini.

In the summer of 1909, Amedeo goes back to Livorno and his mother on the 3rd of July writes a letter to her sister-in-law Vera. "Dedo is out all day at his friend's studio" — Eugenia will write in another letter to her daughter Margherita. His friend is Gino Romiti and Amedeo is busy painting the "beggar of Livorno". The heat, in the city belonging to the Medici, does not aid his health. "Dedo asks his family for help to go and sculpt the heads that he drew in Paris, on the Apuan" — writes Aldo Santini in the biography he penned, "Modigliani" in 1987. It will be his brother Emanuele that helps him once more with his mission to go sculpt between the caves. of Mount Altissimo. He doesn't want to leave immediately; in his mind he has projects he wants to work on before going back to Paris. So Amedeo "goes to Carrara. From there to Seravezza. From Seravezza to Pietrasanta. He is looking for a studio to rent", continues Santini.

In Versilia there is marble, fresh air from the chestnut trees, silence, the healthiest climate. Modigliani resides once again in Emilio Puliti's house, just married in the summer on 1908 to Adalgisa Bruni. He can no longer sculpt in the courtyard, so he starts searching for a studio. Whilst he is convincing himself to go to Paris, he carries on working... and it is Bruno Miniati, photographer and "war correspondent" in 1914, and student like Dedo of Micheli in Livorno, who recounts of an evening in 1909 where Modigliani "came to the Cafe dei Bardi with a bag and inside it a bundle. Within it, is a 'head' made of stone that he shows his friends. Romiti, Natali, Benvenuti as well as Miniati were all there. "He showed it to us, asking if we liked it... - Miniati continued. No one liked' the head and we began teasing him about Paris. Dedo didn't give a big reaction, he just threw the head in water. We were opposite the Dutch Church..." (This is not the same instance as 1913 in which we threw the heads in a ditch in front of the central market where the town hall had given Modigliani a shop — writes Santini).

Bearing witness to a trip in 1913: a letter from Modigliani's mother and the correspondence between Amedeo and Paul: two letters and eight postcards. The 15th of April the first departed from Livorno and the 13th of June the last letter was sent from Versilia where he announced his imminent return to Paris. On the 23rd of April 1913 Modigliani writes to Paul "... repletion is getting closer. It will not tend it's bow before I have worked on it for roughly another fifteen days... I would make everything in marble... the village in which I would literally and figuratively set up my tent, set up camp, has a blinding light, of the most blinding and limpid air and light that exists..."

Modigliani is in Livorno but is mentally already in Little Athens. He feels his creative capabilities growing and imagines being there to realise the project that he had already been thinking of in Paris when he takes his drawings with him.

On May the 6th he writes two postcards from Pietrasanta, where he has been a couple of days by this point. The images reproduced are the church of the Archpriesthood of Vallecchia and an aerial view ,of the village of Retignano.

As Chroniclers and aficionados of the story, we wanted to follow the artist's tracks going to the places that he himself visited and spoke of. We imagined seeing them through his eyes and in his era, alongside the curious gaze of those that are following clues. Research in local archives, churches, listening to academics of art, and experts in local history. "The blinding village" he writes about, we believe to be Piazza del Duomo of exposed Pietrasanta 'on all sides facing the sun, clad in marble. How could one not imagine him searching for inspiration and comfort in a place where you could breathe in the history of art and where Michelangelo's passing by still echos? A few steps from his abode. The Puliti house in Via di Mezzo, now has a different entrance. Where there once was a large doorway, there are now shop windows, however from the back of the shop one can still see the internal courtyard, nestled between two rows of houses, now partly closed. It is from Via del Mazzocco with its little shops that we can see and reconstruct the courtyard as it once was. A German sculptor welcomed us, as he had chosen that "village" to place his "tent", like many other foreigners, that today make Pietrasanta the city that is most densely populated with artists. The accommodation rented by Emilio Puliti, for years, is now empty and for sale.

We are not the only ones who believe and are in search for proof of Modigliani's presence in Pietrasanta. We are however the first who have established important and documented ties between his presence in these places, his activity as a sculptor and the probable "Virgil" who accompanied him in his discovery and acquaintance with stone, and its craftsmanship.

For years experts like the journalist and art critic Lodovico Gierut have been digging in the archives of Pietrasanta and Seravezza trying to put together tassels of this mosaic. "Those Who come to Pietrasanta as artists will become sculptors. If he came to Pietrasanta in 1902, and he did, he was stuck on marble" — Gierut says.

We asked ourselves how Modigliani sculpted, with what tools, and what he could have learned from his first trip to the Apuan Alps, that allowed him to work in Paris in a studio with Brancusi from the spring of 1909.

"Modigliani especially used the roman bush hammer, a subbia⁴, and a step chisel. If he wanted to bring his work to perfection, he would also use a sharp chisel". Ezio Marcucci, looking very well in his seventy-three years, with a vivacious spirit and refined dialectic, tells us immediately of his collection of sculpting tools, possibly one of a kind, in the world. Of incredible knowledge, self-taught, already Councillor for culture, in a long interview recorded in front of a caffè, he tells us of the phases that magically transform a piece of stone into a creation that is full of life. "For Modigliani this was enough. He wasn't interested in going past the chiselling or sketching. He wasn't interested in finishes and polishing. He was a sculptor that removed, he never loved moulding, he conceived his pieces as Michelangelo did, violently breaking marble. If he had wanted to create more refined things, he would have had to go to one of the many workshops present in Pietrasanta. Modigliani's marble is not honed, it is rough, scratched, harsh, because he liked badly defined statues, and though that the perfectly smoothened out masterpieces by Canova, were akin to "cemeterial". We show him three photographs of sculptures, and ask him to explain their making.

"This is semi raw. In the external part there is chiselling. Therefore, there was a phase of grinding, a phase of rough-hew, of sketching, but there is a certain vocation, a particular creative idea.

When presented with the second image he explains that it is grained: done before finishing is applied. This

⁴ A tool in iron in the shape of a scalpel with a quadrangular pyramid, or cone shaped head, used by stonemasons to rough out stones, detaching rather voluminous chips of it.

was done on sand or with a grained scalpel. It is evident that he has tried various techniques but also different materials. He is experimenting, and well, because on these faces he has applied techniques that are each different to the next. The artist approaches the stone with the instruments at their disposal." We come out of this search with some certainties, yet still many queries to resolve.

If Modigliani in Tuscany lives such a high moment of exaltation and inspiration (as is witnessed by the last notes written to Paul Alexandre from Pietrasanta) why are there no statues in existence from that period? Can an artist who is convinced that he is "replenished" in his thoughts and thus mature enough to create, not have then actually worked stone?

Could Modigliani not have left sculptural tracks of his experience in Italy? Maybe he did leave some which were then destroyed or sit in private collections?

"Modigliani is not taken seriously by the Italian elite. There was never a real warmth towards him, explains Federico Zeri, an art critic, in a radio show on the 10th of March 2003 "at eight o'clock in the evening" — His artwork is understood after his death. There are no important Italian Modigliani collectors and those who did possess his work, sold it on. In the world however, there is no large collection that does not have artwork by Modigliani. Modigliani gives status... perhaps that is why counterfeits proliferate". This limited edition, intended to conclude our homage to the artist in the centenary of his passing, is destined to all those that know how unique and limited in numbers Amedeo Clemente Modigliani's artistic production was. These pages, and the book that follows are judged by critics as the most complete collection of facts on Modigliani and in particular, of young Modigliani, the boy who was enamoured by stone/the boy who loved stone.. . Written and finalised, November 3rd 2020.

Summary of the Modigliani's sculpting period, reconstructed based on testimony and existing testimonial proof:

1901 In Naples Modigliani is "struck" by the sculptures of the 1300 sculpted by the artist from Siena Tino di Camaino.

1902 He arrives in Pietrasanta, hosted by Emilio Puliti scarpellino⁵, son of Vincenzo "marmista"⁶. Here he learns the first rudiments of stone. He writes to his friend from Livorno Gino Romiti to whom he mentions a "head".

1902 Venice - He often speaks of Tino di Camaino, to the Spanish artist Ortiz de Zarate and confides that "his burning desire is to become a sculptor".

1905 Venice — Zarate's friend writes for him an introductory letter where he defines him as a "sculptor" which is to be given to Granowsky, a sculptor in Paris.

1906 Modigliani goes to Paris with said letter and demonstrates to Granowsky his interest in sculpting, He sculpts stone in his first studio In Rue Caulaincourt.

1907 He sculpts a piece of wood he retrieves in the Barbès underground station in Paris.

1908 Through Dr. Alexandre, Modigliani comes to know the . Romanian sculptor Brancusi and they share a studio in Cite Falguiere.

1909 Trip to Italy — He goes back to Pietrasanta and to Livorno where he paints "Il mendicante di Livorno"

1909 He goes back to Pietrasanta to Emilio Puliti

1910 He continues to sculpt in Paris

1911 He showcases 7 sculptures at the showroom de Autonom

1912 He sculpts and designs sculptural projects in Paris

⁵ Colloquial term in Tuscany for stonemason

⁶ Marble worker

1913 In Paris he designs sculptural projects and in April he returns to Italy, in Livorno, to Carrara and Pietrasanta where he goes back to sculpting still hosted by Emilio Puliti

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